



City of Rockville
Department of Recreation and Parks
Senior Services Long Range Plan

**TASK FORCE REPORT
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**



*Rockville Senior Services
Add Years to Your Life and Life to Your Years!*

October 5, 2006

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The City of Rockville would like to thank the following residents who served on the Senior Services Long Range Plan Task Force. These individuals gave their time, expertise and creativity to thoughtfully and critically examine the services to senior citizens provided by the Department of Recreation and Parks through the Senior Services Division and suggest directions for the future.

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In addition, the following staff from the Department of Recreation and Parks assisted by providing information and support to the Task Force:

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The City of Rockville's senior population is expected to increase by almost 100% from 8,202 in year 2003 to more than 15,000 in year 2020 including a 45% growth of the population 85 years of age and older. But the sheer numbers of seniors alone is not the only variable that will impact Rockville's seniors. A variety of reputable sources argue that many of today's economic, social, health, and quality of life issues for current seniors will only increase over the next ten to fifteen years. In addition, the complexity and variety of needed supports will necessarily change as the seniors pass through the stages of aging. The important issue for the City of Rockville is that its programs and services recognize these challenges and change to accommodate its evolving senior population.

In response to this concern, the City of Rockville created a Senior Services Long Range Plan Task Force in January 2006 to:

“Look at issues, trends and future demands for senior services, while establishing priorities to meet new and possibly different service requirements.”

The Task Force was composed of eighteen citizens who met to consider information, deliberate issues and develop the recommendations presented in this report.

The Task force believes that the City's overall goals for senior services should be:

- *To enable senior residents to “age in place” in their Rockville homes insofar as is possible.*
- *To coordinate senior-related City programs internally and interface them externally to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of services for seniors at reasonable cost.*
- *To offer an expanded menu of affordable programs, activities and services for seniors to meet the new and changing needs of a growing senior population.*
- *To provide or arrange services for seniors when needed to help meet basic life needs— food, clothing, shelter, health care, in-home care, transportation and social interaction.*

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The preferred strategy for achieving these goals is to:

- Continue providing programs and services directly through the Department of Recreation and Parks using the Senior Center as the primary location.
- Rely on City staff as a core of knowledgeable, experienced providers, supplemented by volunteers and contract assistance as appropriate.
- Extend senior program and activity offerings to Rockville neighborhoods using other City facilities to improve access, ease space constraints and meet increased demand.
- Use new, improved or expanded marketing efforts to inform senior residents of City programs and services and determine their interests and needs.
- Fund recreation and fitness programs, as well as educational activities and trips, to an increasing extent through user charges and fees.
- Research, develop and test, with general fund monies, new programs and events.
- Coordinate senior-related programs in all City Departments and interface with County and State programs.

The following is a summary of the recommendations included in this report. Detailed information on the issues and rationale for the recommendation can be found in the report text.

1. Fiscal Challenges and Resource Needs

- 1.1 Membership dues should be adjusted every three years to account for inflation and reflect cost of enhanced programs and services. In addition, variable membership fees should be set for different age groups.
- 1.2 Non-resident/non-members should be allowed to participate in programs and activities to help offset their cost, provided that individuals are at least 60 years of age; that they pay a premium fee; and that current members and residents have preference.
- 1.3 The Division should continue to pursue its cost recovery targets. The Division should also identify which programs and services could benefit from new or revised user charges.
- 1.4 The Division of Senior Services should continue to develop and analyze options for budgeting for meeting future senior service needs and requirements.
- 1.5 Recognizing the need for new future revenues, Division staff should work with Rockville Seniors, Incorporated (RSI) to identify and pursue new sources of funds, grant opportunities, marketing strategies and ways to increase membership.

2. City Policies Regarding Senior Services

- 2.1 The Task Force recommends that the Mayor and Council adopt an official policy designating the City of Rockville a “senior friendly community.”

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- 2.2 The Task Force recommends the City continue to budget for a 20% participation rate at the Center and in the community.
- 2.3 The Task Force recommends that the Mayor and Council, after reviewing this report, formulate specific policy guidance and direction that can be used by all City Departments to plan, budget for, and manage programs and services that affect senior residents.

3. Facilities for Senior Programs and Activities

- 3.1 The Task Force recommends the continued support for the Department's Senior Center Master Plan that is part of the City's Capital Improvements Plan (CIP).
- 3.2 Demand for evening/weekend programs should be accommodated by expanding Center operating hours as required as younger seniors may require programs and services other than during regular daytime/weekday operating hours.

4. Transportation Challenges

- 4.1 Implement a minimal fee system for the Senior Bus service.
- 4.2 Consider expanding the transportation options for seniors (e.g., escorted transportation and shopping from private residences).
- 4.3 Work with County and WMATA to search for other senior supportive transportation options.
- 4.4 Advertise on the senior buses.
- 4.5 Seek donations from community and/or bus riders.

5. Management & Technical Personnel to Support Senior Programs

- 5.1 The Task Force recommends: (1) that the City give serious consideration to expanding the resources of the Senior Services Division; and (2) that the Division allocate resources to identifying new managerial and technical skills that will be needed to meet future demands for programs and services and develop a plan for acquiring those skills — whether by staff expansion, contract, training or volunteerism.
- 5.2 The Task Force recommends that the Department give high priority to acquiring additional staff for “off budget” fund raising and developing cooperative arrangements with County, State and Federal organizations, private foundations and business organizations and ensuring resources are available for professional development and training.

6. Research and Program Design Capabilities for Senior-Related Programs and Services

- 6.1 The Task Force recommends that the Department of Recreation and Parks establish a research and development program to design new and expanded programs and activities as well as evaluate existing services for Rockville senior residents.

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7. Intra- and Inter-Governmental Program Coordination

- 7.1 The Task Force recommends that the Mayor and Council adopt a policy stating explicitly that it expects City programs to be internally coordinated and adequately interfaced with related county, state and federal programs.
- 7.2 The Task Force recommends that the City take actions to increase and improve internal coordination and external interfacing of senior-related programs and activities.

8. Technology Beneficial to Seniors

- 8.1 Continue to provide technology classes and workshops to ensure seniors are aware of, and able to use, equipment that will improve their quality of life.
- 8.2 The Division should explore ways in which local high schools or Montgomery College students could be encouraged to participate in work/volunteer programs relating to technology beneficial to seniors.

9. Community Education and Awareness of Senior Services

- 9.1 The Task Force recommends that the Department of Recreation and Parks develop a “communications and marketing plan” for senior programs, activities and services which can be monitored, evaluated and revised periodically (perhaps every three years).

10. Volunteer Support for Senior Services

- 10.1 The Task Force recommends the Center continue to recruit and reward volunteers, as well as, ensure their volunteer experience is satisfying.
- 10.2 The staff should solicit or develop a list of volunteer opportunities from all City Departments and update it regularly.

11. Information and Opportunities Clearinghouse for Seniors

- 11.1 The Task Force recommends that the Division promote its library of information housed at the Senior Center. This would facilitate the Senior Center to become more known as the place to call for assistance.
- 11.2 The Task Force recommends that the City investigate the possibility of closer ties with the Maryland Senior Job Bank.
- 11.3 The Task Force recommends that the City investigate the need for and benefits of providing a structured program of information, services and advice for transitioning seniors.

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- 11.4 The Task Force supports the Senior Commission's developing concept for providing in-home support to seniors who need basic household assistance such as, cutting grass, snow removal, minor repairs, etc.

12. Cultural Diversity in Senior Programs

- 12.1 The Task Force recommends that the Department of Recreation and Parks develop a phased plan and program for encouraging expanded participation in senior activities by groups now under-represented.

Conclusion

The City has an excellent senior services program, which operates out of a multi-functional facility with a competent and dedicated staff. Its many programs, activities and services are far ranging and varied. Many are self-supporting or nearly so. Few localities in Maryland and Montgomery County, in the Task Force's opinion, are similarly positioned.

The City of Rockville, however, will experience major increases in senior citizens, 60 years and older, between now and the year 2020. Estimates for the City are for a 100% increase in its senior population. The impact of this growth on the City, its residents' quality of life and its programs and budget will be quickly apparent. The Task Force commends the Department of Recreation and Parks, the Senior Commission, and Rockville Seniors, Inc. for recognizing the need to begin preparations.

The tsunami is coming. The change provides both challenges and opportunities for the City of Rockville. The Task Force has identified a set of challenges that it believes will require high priority attention by the Mayor and Council, the Department of Recreation and Parks and the Division of Senior Services in the next few years. The Task Force is appreciative of the City's long-standing support for its senior citizens and is pleased to present its findings and recommendations for further consideration.